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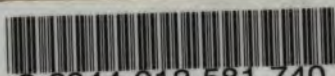
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*With kind regards to  
Geo. D. Pinkerton.*

AN ORATION

DELIVERED AT

WEST CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA,

ON THE

17th of June, 1875,

THE ONE HUNDREDDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF  
BUNKER HILL.

BY

JOHN J. PINKERTON.

WEST CHESTER:  
ALFRED RUPERT.  
1875.

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**HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY  
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TO

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS,

WHO HAS BY HIS LIFE ILLUSTRATED THE DUTY OF THE

AMERICAN SCHOLAR TO THE STATE,

*This Discourse*

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



## ORATION.

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ON this calm June day, decorated by all the beauty and splendor of the season, when the air is sweet with opening buds, and perfumed with flowers, we have come from our accustomed avocations, and with prayer and music, and civic procession, seek to honor the occasion upon which, one hundred years ago, our fathers stood in a heroic struggle for independence.

As with reverent tread and thoughtful speech we come here to recount the deeds of this heroic day, and tell again with tender pride the story of their devotion, it is that, by the help of their high example, we may try to do the duty which in our time God casts upon each one of us.

And while we thus consecrate this hour, it is not simply to praise the dead for their courage, but to venerate their memories as heroic martyrs falling in a noble struggle; remembering that it is not their valor alone, but the holy cause in which they fell, that has made them immortal.



The men of New England who, on the 17th of June, 1775, marched across Charlestown neck to Bunker Hill, without ammunition, without training, without organization, knew well the fearful odds against them. They went with uplifted faces, as to another mount of sacrifice, repeating the lesson of all History, that only by the shedding of blood could redemption be purchased. As Humanity sweeps onward, her shining track is illumined by the aureate glow of the martyrs and defenders who have died to help her, and you may trace her progress back from stake to stake, from fagot to fagot, from scaffold to scaffold, back to the hill of Calvary with its glorious cross and its triumphant victim.

The fight at Bunker Hill was the inevitable sequence of the events which had only a few months before transpired elsewhere. The opening scenes in the great drama had already been enacted. The lantern from the belfry of the old North Church had by its flickering light told the march of the British.

“One if by land, and two if by sea,”

was its signal. Paul Revere, spurring at midnight through the land, had summoned his

countrymen to the rescue. In the gray dawn of a spring morning, a group of sturdy Middlesex farmers, gathered upon the village green, had received and returned the fire of the King's troops. The sacred dead of Lexington and Concord had been buried; and now the crisis which the wise men of the Revolution had striven by lip and pen to avert, was upon them, and the whole land was aflame with the fires of civil war!

"No subjects more sincerely desire to testify<sup>7</sup> their loyalty and affection," declared the provincial Congress; "we deplore the measures which, if persisted in, must rend the British Empire. Trusting the event to Providence, we prefer death to slavery."

"We speak the real sentiments of the colonies when we declare that all the horrors of civil war will never compel America to submit to taxation by authority of Parliament," said John Jay, of New York.

"The blow struck in Massachusetts," wrote James Madison, of Virginia, "is a hostile attack on this and every colony."

"A general rebellion throughout America is coming on suddenly and swiftly," reported Sir

James Wright, the governor of Massachusetts; “matters will go on to the uttermost extremity.”

How Bunker Hill was fought I need not today recount in your hearing. It is History with which you and your children are all familiar, and has been repeated again and again at every fireside in the land.

It is a spectacle that has compelled the admiration of the world; a body of New England husbandmen, in the sight of their burning homes, meeting in the fierce shock and onset of battle the trained soldiers of Great Britain, and whom, though at last forced to leave their works, the world will always crown as victors. Entrenched behind earthworks they had thrown up during the night and protected on the flank by a fence of posts with two rails set upon a low stone wall, these embattled farmers received and repulsed with deadly slaughter an enemy nearly three times their number.

Twice the British veterans under Howe attacked the earthworks, and were twice repulsed with a terrific fire. Twice on the flank Piggot strove to reach the rail fence, and was each time driven back in disorder. And it was

only when their ammunition was exhausted, and they were left to fight the enemy with the butt ends of their guns, striking them with the barrels after the stocks were broken, that the gallant band were forced to abandon their fortification. Compelled, it is true, to retire, they only did so after inflicting a terrible loss upon their foes. On the meadows where the day before the mowers had swung the scythe in peace, "the dead," says Colonel John Stark, "lay as thick as sheep in a fold."

The British killed and wounded were ten hundred and fifty-four; seventy commissioned officers were wounded—thirteen slain. The whole loss of the Americans amounted to one hundred and forty-five killed and missing, and three hundred and four wounded.

Such, my countrymen, is the story of Bunker Hill; such were the men who fought it. Whether we view the desperate character of the encounter, the deathless heroism of the combatants, or the vast significance of the struggle—measure it by what lofty ideals we may, they have no peers in history; "not less beautiful in their devotion, not less deserving the everlasting gratitude of mankind, than

those immortal three hundred who in the summer morning sat combing their golden hair in the passes of Thermopylæ.”

In Bunker Hill we have an epitome of the whole seven years revolution; a brave people contending against fearful odds, animated by a high principle, which no dangers could affright nor obstacles overcome. With heroic courage and enduring patience, without money, without munitions of war, neither deluded by the hope of easy victory, nor disheartened by long delay, they kept their faith in the cause for which they fought.

Recalling, to-day, the memories of this day, I have chosen to speak to you of one of the heroes of Bunker Hill, rather than of the battle itself. For while the occasion prescribes my theme, the times prescribe my treatment of it.

Just one hundred years ago to-day, Joseph Warren, a young man born to fortune and the highest social position, of rare culture enriched by extensive reading, graceful and charming in person and presence, with lofty hopes and all to make life worth living for, after discharging his duty in the committee of safety, resolved to take part in the battle.

“He was entreated by Elbridge Gerry,” says Bancroft, “not thus to expose his life.” It is pleasant and becoming to die for one’s country, was his answer.

Just three days before, he had been elected a major general. He knew perfectly well the defects of the American camp, the danger of the entrenched party, and how the character of his countrymen and the interests of mankind hung in suspense on the conduct of that day.

About two o’clock he crossed Bunker Hill alone, with a musket in his hand. He stood for a short time near a cannon at the rail fence, in conversation with Israel Putnam, who declared a readiness to receive his orders; but Warren declined to assume command, and passed on to the redoubt which was expected to be the chief point of attack; as soon as he arrived there, Prescott proposed he should take command, but he answered him as he had done Putnam: “I come as a volunteer to learn of a soldier of experience,” and in choosing his station he looked only for the place of greatest danger and importance. Then, fighting through that hot summer day, “just at the moment of

retreat," says Bancroft, "fell Joseph Warren last in the trenches."

And, my friends, there is to-day no figure in history more attractive, more inspiring, more alluring. Not Philip Sidney on that misty morning upon the Yssel, rushing to save his friend, Lord Willoughby; not John Hampden riding slowly out of battle to die for England; not Cardigan charging at Balaklava,

"Into the mouth of Hell,  
while  
All the world wonder'd."

Coming as I do to-day with the name of Joseph Warren upon my lips, it is only that I may show to young Americans what such an example is worth; that I may say, O my brothers, there is no strife more worthy, no ambition more lofty, than to be like him, who

"Crown'd  
A happy life with a fair death, and fell  
In battle, fighting for the blameless cause."

"In him were combined," says Bancroft, "celerity, courage, endurance, and manners which won universal love. He opposed the British government not from interested motives, nor from resentment. A guileless and

intrepid advocate of the rights of mankind, he sought not to appear a patriot; he was one in truth. As the moment for the appeal to arms approached, where peril was greatest he was present, animating not by words alone, but ever by his example.

His integrity, the soundness of his judgment, his ability to write readily and well, his fervid eloquence, his exact acquaintance with American rights, gave authority to his advice in private and in the provincial congress. Had he lived, the future seemed burdened with his honors; he cheerfully sacrificed all for his country and for freedom. Sorrow could now no more come nigh him, and he went to dwell in men's memories with Hampden.

His enemies recognized his worth by their exultation at his fall. By his countrymen he was "most sincerely and universally lamented;" his mother could not be consoled.

His death, preceded by that of his wife, left his children altogether orphans, till the continent at the motion of Samuel Adams adopted them in part at least as its own.

The congress of his native State, that knew him well and had chosen him to guide their



debates, and recently to high command in their army, proclaimed to the world their "veneration for Joseph Warren, whose memory is endeared to his countrymen and to the worthy in every part and age of the world, so long as virtue and valor shall be esteemed among men."

Such was Warren's character as sketched by the charming chronicler of our Revolution, and whose very words I have used in describing him. And what, do you ask me, is the lesson of his life in times like these, when the signs of plenty and security are everywhere visible, when the rush and roar of our mighty machinery is constantly heard, when our commerce whitens every sea, and the benediction of a profound peace rests upon the land? I answer that the duty which Joseph Warren to-day teaches the young of America by his example, is the entire consecration of their highest powers to the service of the Republic.

The summoning call, which here and now challenges every young man in the land, is to leave his ease and retirement, and by his voice, his vote, and his influence, have an agency in public affairs. The summons is not like Warren's to march and fight, but the peril which

threatens is none the less imminent. The danger which confronts our national life and menaces public security is, that good men are forsaking politics and political life to those who have neither the capacity nor the character for such service.

“New occasions teach new duties.”

While with the enormous accumulation of our national wealth, the development of our vast domain, the increase of our national resources, the electric telegraph and steam engine, came blessings the fathers never knew; with them came dangers of which they never dreamed. The temptation to political corruption; the peculation in public funds; the subsidizing of gigantic corporations to private ends; the hungry greed for dishonest gain; the immense frauds in public revenue, are plagues which were reserved for us and our time: and it is to meet these and evils like these, that the patriotic citizen must to-day rouse himself and prepare. The dictation of a corrupt ring; the rule of a packed caucus; the stuffing of ballot boxes, the forging of false election returns; the packing of juries; the corruption of judges;

the purchase of legislators and members of congress; are the unseen foes that spring from their hiding places and fire upon us from every ambuscade; enemies more deadly and fatal in their aim than shotted gun or charging bayonet. No thoughtful American, but observes with alarm, that our politics are fast becoming mean and selfish and corrupt; that political preferment comes not to those who by a faithful allegiance to principle have won the approval of good men, but to the adroit politician who most skilfully manages a caucus, or most successfully gags a convention.

He sees with amazement, inspired harlequins and jabbering mountebanks and trading charlatans thrust constantly into place, only to make the public service at once a by-word and a disgrace.

The typical statesman of to-day is one who neither commands confidence nor invites respect; self-willed, arrogant, and domineering; in private life not sometimes without generous qualities, but in public life having no scruples; artful and adroit, hesitating at no mean artifice and stooping to any low trick; a man spotted and leprous in every

feature and lineament, and whose name festers with all that is vicious and corrupt.

Honesty, efficiency, and fidelity seem to be no longer the credentials that win success, and as a result we witness the spectacle of a great nation that has mortgaged its right hand to pay the debt incurred in securing its perpetuity; cheated and robbed in the collection of its revenue by the most gigantic system of fraud the world has ever seen. These things exist and will continue to exist so long as appointment to office is the reward of dirty work done at the polls. Their continuance weakens and rots the very foundations of government, and to permit them is a national crime. It is true of ours, as of the venality of the British Parliament in 1775, when the great Chatham thundered against it. "Before the close of this century either Parliament will reform itself from within or be reformed with a vengeance from without."

Remember, we are a government yet upon trial. Democracy is still an experiment and its success or failure is with us. We must manifest genius for administration and capacity for government equal to the occasion we

accept. We must prove ourselves equal to the problems of peace, as well as the exigencies of war. God is continually tossing back to the human race its failures and commanding it to try again, and we only defeat the final end by submitting to such an evil system.

“Bad men have their uses,” is the cry which comes from the party managers. “No party can ever win that ignores its active workers,” by which is meant the party schemers. I admit the necessity of party organization and party work, but to say that bad men must be rewarded by giving them office, is to confess party rottenness and inefficiency. “Bad men have their uses;” “you must fight the devil with fire,” shouts back the heated orator of the hustings. And to him I oppose the lofty words of Edmund Burke, one of the wisest of Englishmen and profoundest of statesmen, “I do declare my conviction, and wish it may be recorded to posterity,” says Burke, “that there never was a bad man that had ability for good service.”

As the danger is apparent, the duty is plain; where demagogues combine, good men must organize and protest. I know the accustomed

reply with which I shall be met and with which we all excuse ourselves. I remember the hackneyed retort about the dirtiness of politics; but if politics are a dirty pool and public life debasing, it is only because good men have permitted it. It is the parlors and not the grogshops that are responsible.

Nor am I unmindful of the flings at educated men which are constantly heard from those who have the wisdom of serpents, without the harmlessness of doves. I am familiar with the common sneer at "men of the clean shirt and daily bath;" at "theorists" and "parlor politicians," which are only other names for educated and cultivated men. But, my friends, the men who in every age and every nation have helped mankind on to newer and better conditions of government, were educated men and scholars, were idealists and dreamers.

On the 28th of June, 1776, Thomas Jefferson, of Virginia, then just thirty-three years old, a lawyer by profession, and one who had devoted much of his time to calm and philosophic study—who was in the fullest sense a scholar—introduced into the continental congress the declaration which he had drafted.

“We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” Here was an educated man and an idealist, and all the sly demagogues of that age jeered at the Declaration of Independence. But the holy army of martyrs throughout all the world cried, Amen!

Samuel Adams was a dreamer; James Otis, the fiery tongue of the Revolution, was a scholar; Benjamin Franklin was an idealist.

And the greatest statesman of our own day brought to his duties profound scholarship, thorough training, and elaborate culture; came to the Senate bearing the full sheaf of all literature and laden with the spoil of all tongues. He, whom a nation has just borne to his grave amid signs of universal love and universal woe, whose memory will be sweet wherever liberty is worshipped, was an idealist and a dreamer. As was said with rare felicity by the orator chosen by Massachusetts to give voice to her

eulogy, Charles Sumner was an educated man, a college-bred man, as all the great revolutionary leaders of Massachusetts were; and he knew, as every intelligent man knows, that, from the day Themistocles led the educated Athenians at Salamis, to that when Von Moltke led the educated Germans against France, the sure foundations of states are laid in knowledge, not in ignorance; and that every sneer at education, at cultivation, at book learning, is the demagogue's sneer at intelligent liberty, inviting national degradation and ruin.

I know that in saying what I do, I contradict the traditional proprieties of such an occasion, and should rather avoid all living issues and discuss only vague generalities or abstract theories. It is related of the pirates of the Caribbean Sea, that they always repeated the ten commandments, leaving out "Thou shalt not steal," and at such times as these it is thought to be the duty of the speaker to imitate their example. Yet I should insult your intelligence and be shamed by the high example I present for your imitation, if I omitted one word of truth, because it might clash with national pride or national selfishness.



The memory of Joseph Warren would not be dear to men's hearts to-day, if when the rights of America were invaded, he had advised a tame submission to an unjust parliament. The pressure of a timid conservatism that is satisfied things should always remain as they are was as great in Warren's day as in ours. The Tory Daniel Leonard, of New York, insisted that the peace of the country should not be disturbed by a few foolish farmers, who wildly protested against taxation without representation. "Happy shall we be," answered Warren, "if the mother country will allow us the free enjoyment of our rights, but if Britain must lose her liberty, she must lose it alone. America must and will be free. The contest may be severe; the end will be glorious."

Daniel Webster in his lofty way sneered at this "rub-a-dub anti-slavery agitation," as he called it, but the agitation grew and at last Mr. Webster was swept before it like a dry leaf upon Niagara.

Nor will refusing to look at the dangers I have mentioned help to avert them. The crime of our time, and of which you and I are guilty, is the crime of indifference to politics. We

need not read history very far, however, to learn the fate of those who believed, with the ostrich, that the way to avert a danger was to shut your eyes to it.

The youngest man who hears me can remember the times never to be recalled without a blush, days of servitude without patriotism, the golden age of the coward, when your great city of Philadelphia, cringing at the foot of the slave power of the country, refused a public hall to the most distinguished orator and accomplished gentleman of the country, because he had a word to say in his lecture about human slavery. When Mayor Alexander Henry wrote to George William Curtis and begged him not to imperil the safety of the city by his presence at Concert Hall. And yet within a single year, in that city, the same obsequious mayor had to implore a mob of her citizens not to tear to pieces a newspaper office because it did not display the national emblem from its windows.

The young man will recall, too, how the merchants of Philadelphia shivered and ducked and apologized, and refused to hang out flags across Market street, lest it might drive trade from their wharves and counting-houses, and yet

three short years afterwards we saw these same merchants on the bloody fields of Antietam and Gettysburg, moving among the ghastly army of the slain, lifting the dead cloths from their forms, to see if in the pale faces of the fallen they could detect the features of their own first born—the crime of indifference to politics was paying itself with frightful compound interest.

It is for us then not to turn with averted faces from the menacing dangers which at this hour imperil our safety, but with resolute courage, worthy of the fathers from which we came, confront and overpower them.

Happily for all of us the government of this country, the seed of which Warren planted and sealed with his blood, is a government in which all power is derived from the people, and in which all evils will in time be remedied by the people themselves. “I would, therefore, wish the government here to be so happily constituted,” said Warren, “that the only road to promotion may be through the affections of the people.” Such a government the fathers founded—and in our time your sons and brothers died to uphold.

Already its benign influence is being felt;

even now the mother country is yielding to its example; and there the road to promotion is no longer through a long line of hereditary title or patrician descent. Seventy years ago Burke, speaking to his countrymen of their aristocratic class, ascribed to them a high place which they alone were able to fill, and assigned to them duties in governmental affairs which they alone were by nature fitted to perform. To-day the aristocracy of England are aghast at the spectacle their politics present. Of the two great parties dividing the country, one claims as its idol a man whose faith is to refuse homage to rank and to ignore ceremonial offices; while the other great party is marshalled by one who wears the lineaments of a race which, when Burke wrote, was ineligible to parliament. John Bright, the son of a Quaker, is the sturdy champion of the people, and Benjamin Disraeli, the son of a Jew, prime minister of England.

Let no man despond nor despair! I am not here to dampen the ardor of any youthful American as he contemplates his country with satisfaction, but only to urge him to newer and fuller activity. I am holding up Warren as a model, not as a reproach! Let no man vainly

sigh for a return of what he thinks was the golden age of America, or for one moment believe that with the Revolution were closed the heroic chapters of our history.

The men who in our time stood under the iron storm that flashed from the blazing ramparts of Port Hudson, or who in the fiery surge that swept the field at Gettysburg held the gates of the North against the invader, were worthy of their ancestors who fought at Bunker Hill. The children of blameless households, of lofty courage, of untarnished honor, the very flower and bloom of manly character, like Warren, cultured, attractive, and handsome, like Warren, they abandoned ease and comfort and home, and girded themselves for the battle.

From the hillsides of New England, from the apple orchards of New York, from the teeming fields of the West, from the busy homes of Pennsylvania, these young men rode down to succor the country in her hour of severest trial, crowding her highways as to a festival. They followed Sheridan as with desolating hoof he rode down the valley of the Shenandoah, while Early fled before the gleam of his pursuing spear. They climbed the perilous heights of

Lookout Mountain and fought with Hooker among the clouds. They marched with Sherman as with the swiftness of a hot avenger he swept from Atlanta to the sea. They gathered with the encompassing hosts of Grant as he grimly contended in the Wilderness, and were at last crowned with immortal victory at Appomattox.

Believing with all my heart that the young men are the hope of this country, and that with them rests its future glory, I counsel them to neglect no opportunity, to omit no duty. Ignorance and selfishness are busily at work, and with a thousand hands, in every part of the land. The enemy is as crafty as it is cruel. To-day it is a party trick or unfit nomination, to-morrow it is a perverted press or an unscrupulous orator; now sneaking behind a meaningless platform, now skulking in the shadow of some unworthy candidate, that enemy is striving to gain by strategy what it cannot win by prowess in a fair fight.

As, when this government which Warren died to found was threatened with dissolution, a countless host sprang to her defence; so in these later days of peaceful assault her children

will not be found wanting. The valor which has won the great battle of human civilization, still lingers among those who remain.

Minute Men of America! the battle is still yours. Be alert, be active, be valiant! And as to-day, looking back across these one hundred years, you see that noble, intrepid form, standing erect and glowing in the wild whirl of battle, animating and cheering his countrymen, and then falling towards the foe, dead but triumphant, let that vision serve to inspire and exalt you for the struggle.

If you are true to yourselves and faithful to the great trust committed to your keeping, to you will certainly be given the assurance of splendid victory. In your day your country will become all that the fathers in their exultant faith believed. Then shall America be as a golden censer let down from Heaven, reviving and intoxicating the nations with the sweet perfume of Liberty.









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